

Taking Deliveries Seriously



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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is putting the finishing touches on the Dr. Frank V. Benincaso Mother and Infant Pavilion at Caserma Ederle, Vicenza, Italy; the only stand-alone birthing center within the Department of Defense.

Thanks in part to the Corps' efforts, Army families now have something they were sorely lacking: continuity of United States standard quality health care before, during and after childbirth.

The Corps provided project management, design review and oversight, and construction management to the facility when it was originally built, and is tweaking a few last things to ensure maximum efficiency of the facility.

"I just can't say enough positive things about not only the quality and caliber, but the expertise that the Corps brought to the construction project," said Lt. Col. John Alvarez, Deputy Commander of the Vicenza Health Clinic. "The facility has benefited the community in a number of ways. The first is the overall quality of care of the delivery for the wives and spouses of the military community. ... What this does is provide United States standard inpatient health care ... here in Vicenza. It also provides continuity of care for the families."

Before the facility was built, expectant mothers would receive care for the first seven to eight months and then have to go elsewhere for the actual delivery and follow-up care.

"They would have to go back to the states," Alvarez said, "or up to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. They'd have to go to Aviano, or they'd go to a host nation hospital." Now, a woman is treated by the same physician, obstetrician, gynecologist, etc., in the same location throughout her pregnancy, and after, because the new birthing facility is designed to handle it all, Alvarez said.

Alvarez said the facility is very important to the morale of the Army family. It's a little piece of the United States in a foreign country.

Ask a new mother and you'll hear the same. The facility provided the capabilities to perform a Caesarean section close to home with a highly trained

and compassionate staff said new mother Anna-Lisa Whiten; who gave birth to Noah January 26. "It is a comfort to have the ... center because with a possible language barrier you don't have to worry about a miscommunication when you are receiving care," she said. "The most positive aspect about having access to the ... center is knowing that it is here for us ...to monitor our pregnancy and to have a birth either way."

Alvarez said the clinic provides that familiar environment to the Army family. Family support groups are here and available to assist in those roles that the father would normally provide. "It's really the quality of care, the continuity of care, and it's a morale and family support boost."

The facility means a great deal to the Soldiers of the twice deployed SETAF and 173rd Infantry Brigade, Alvarez said, and now "the Soldiers can do their mission, in part, because they know we are taking good care of their loved ones."

The trend in the medical community today is to design new facilities to meet the demands of the population to be served by the facility.

"Our community," Alvarez said, "is a 19 to 34 year old, primarily healthy, population. So we're configuring our facility to meet the specific needs of our population. That's in contrast to our very much 'cookie cutter' approach to hospitals in the past history of the Army's medical department and the Department of Defense as a whole."

The birthing facility establishes a hybrid health care model for locations where service members serve on bases with similar populations and health care needs.

Construction was completed in May 2005 and the Benincaso Pavilion opened the following month. It is named for Dr. Frank V. Benincaso, a pediatrician who worked for 13 years in the installation's health clinic. Benincaso retired from the Army Medical Corps as a colonel after a 30-year Army

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career. The pavilion provides full spectrum service for mothers expecting normal deliveries, and can manage the birth and care of up to four babies daily. High-risk pregnancies are still referred to appropriate medical facilities.

Europe District is now conducting modifications, including upgrading the existing emergency generator system to meet NFPA codes. The district will also revise the Preventive Maintenance Plan, and change the exterior Air Handling Units to meet local noise ordinances.

The Corps, working on a fast track with the European Regional Medical Command (ERMC), built the normally three-to-five-year-project in seven months. The Corps named Bill Delozier, who had previous medical facility construction experience at Fort Stewart, the project manager, and devoted engineering support from both Germany and Italy.

In October 2004 the Deputy Director of Public Works in Vicenza requested Europe District to serve as the Contractor Officer Representative (COR) and project manager, said Delozier, Europe District's



Capt. Yvonne Heib, head nurse, operating room / central material service, prepares for another delivery at the Dr. Frank V. Benincaso Mother and Infant Pavilion on Caserma Ederle, Vicenza, Italy. The state-of-the-art birthing center was completed in seven months and is the only dedicated birthing center in the Department of Defense.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Regional Program Manager supporting the U.S. Army Garrison, Vicenza. Delozier said the Vicenza Resident Office was asked to provide inspection and Quality Assurance support during the construction.

This was a design-build contract with the ERMIC reviewing and approving the design submittals, he added. The DPW and Naval ROICC provided technical review and approval for those areas involving the Italian codes. Europe District's Engineering Branch provided design review support in the areas of mechanical and electrical disciplines.

"Mr. Delozier ... understood the complexity of building a medical facility," Alvarez said. "His experience in Europe also helped him understand the complexity of having an Italian firm design a U.S. specification medical facility and all the challenges that involved. The Corps of Engineers were critical in making that building."

Alvarez applauded Delozier's ability to understand and manage the variety of intricate challenges involved in building such a fast track project.

"I've got a lot of acquisition training," he said, "and it was almost one of those situations where they say at the school house, 'this is what the ideal project would look like if we could make it happen in reality'. And, I actually saw the ideal happen out here in reality."



▲ Staff prepare Anna-Lisa Whiten for her delivery at the birthing pavilion on Caserma Ederle, Vicenza, Italy. Construction of the facility was managed by Europe District and was completed in seven months.

▼ Noah Whiten takes his first breath at 10:28 a.m., Jan. 26, 2006.



◀ Doctors proceed with a Cesarean section at the Dr. Frank V. Benincaso Mother and Infant Pavilion. The pavilion provides full-spectrum services to mothers expecting normal deliveries and contains state-of-the-art equipment to ensure medical procedures run smoothly.

▼ Anna-Lisa, newborn Noah, and Sgt. 1st Class Christopher Whiten at the Dr. Frank V. Benincaso Mother and Infant Pavilion on Caserma Ederle, Vicenza, Italy. The only birthing pavilion in the Department of Defense; the facility provides a great quality of life improvement for Vicenza families.

